

Divine Mercy Exalted :

O R,

Free Grace

In its G L O R Y.

BEING A

S E R M O N

O N

R O M. IX. xvi.

Preach'd at the

Merchants Lecture

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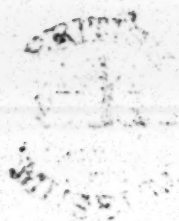
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On Tuesday Octob. 20. 1702.

By *E. Calamy* E. F. & N.--.

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the Angel in the Poultry, 1703.*



T H E
P R E F A C E.

WHEN I Preach'd this Sermon,
I little thought of sending it to the
Press: But had I refus'd as Cir-
cumstances stood, I might have
been charg'd, either with Ingratitude to those
who desir'd it, or Backwardness to stand to the
Doctrine I deliver'd.

Some have given themselves a Liberty to Re-
flect on their Brethren who adhere to the Suffrage
of the Brittish Divines in the Synod of Dort,
as not duly concern'd for the Honour of the
Grace of God in the Salvation of Sinners. One
thing I aim'd at in choosing this Subject, was to
prove that Censure Groundless. 'Tis true, I
have consider'd Divine Grace as Actually dis-
covering it self to Sinners, rather than as Pur-
pos'd in the Decree: But he that would see

that Discuss'd, and the Doctrine of Particular Election maintain'd, Consistently with a General Love of God to the World, would do well to Consult the Learned and Peaceable Bishop Davenant His Animadversions upon Hoard's Treatise of God's Love to Mankind: A Book which is not valu'd according to its worth: tho' one would think it were therefore the more to be regarded in these Points, because the Worthy Author was so Considerable a Member of the Foremention'd Synod, in which the Controversy about Grace and Free-Will was so distinctly debated.

'Tis strange to see how fond some are of Extreams. Be it in Doctrine, Worship or Discipline, they run all Things to the utmost Height. How eagerly will some Contend for an Arbitrary Guess at the Mode of a Revealed Truth, even as if it were a Fundamental Article of Faith! How Positively will others Stamp with an Absolute Jure Divino, what upon Search appears most manifestly to have had an Humane Rise! What a Stress do some lay upon External Ceremonies! and with what Heat do some others oppose them! Even as if not only the Greater or Lesser Purity, but the very Truth or Falshood of Divine Worship depended upon their being added or withdrawn: and Men were either for God or for Baal, according as they fell in with or vary'd from their narrow Schemes
and

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and Models ! What unprejudic'd Stander by but will Conclude, even a Neutrality in Religion, preferable to such Uncharitable Bigottry, and Bitter Zeal ? Touch but a Pin and the whole Ark is in Danger in some Mens Apprehension ; and they'l as much exclaim as if Religion was just expiring. We have had but too much of this from one Age to another, in this poor divided Kingdom : But shall we never come to a Temper ?

*Its matter of great Thankfulness however, that there are some Among the several Contenders, who can Reconcile the thinking themselves in the Right in the main, with Moderation in Principle, and in their Practise too, towards those from whom they differ. 'Tis with these that I desire to take my Lott ; which for that very Reason I expect will not be upon some Accounts the most easy and pleasant. I cannot say it will much surprize me to meet with the Contempt of such as are swallow'd up in the Interests of a Particular Party : But am satisfy'd 'twill yield more Comfort upon a Review, to me to have been herein Passive, than to them to have been Active. Let such call themselves by what Names they please, I cannot see how any thing considerable can ever be expected from them, for the Service of the Common Interest of Religion ; which is daily more and more indanger'd by the Assaults of a sort of Men, who care not
what*

what becomes of the Appendages which the several Parties contend about, so they have but full Scope to destroy the Substance.

For my Part, the Praying with a Form or without one ; the Management of Church Government by Bishops, or Presbyters, alone ; or in Conjunction with some of the Wiser sort from among the People ; and the Mode of Divine Worship as to meer external Circumstances ; are with me very little Things, comparatively to the prevalency of serious Piety, and Brotherly Love among us ; for which, whatever becomes of other things, we have all of us, I am well assur'd, great Reason to be most heartily concerned.

And yet why may not those other things, which are of Importance in their Place, (especially when the Validity of a Regular and Scriptural Ministry is called in Question ;) be soberly Consider'd ? Why may not such things as Good and Wise Men successively have been so unhappy as to differ in, be debated Calmly and Amicably, with a Disinterested Design on each side, that Truth may gain and take place, as far as it is found on either ? And may it not be fairly enough suppos'd, that Truth is not so ingross'd, as to be wholly on the one or on the other Part in every single Point ?

This

This I the rather mention, on the Account of my being drawn into a Controversy about things of this Nature, upon Occasion of my 10th Chapter of the Abridgment of the Life of the Reverend Mr. Baxter. Few Men are less Fond of Controversies than I: yet in this Case I think I am Necessitated. But this I can safely say, I much more desire that Truth should be advanc'd than any Party. And I would not be so uncharitable as to suppose any other than that those Worthy Gentlemen, who have thought fit publicly to appear in Print against me, are of the same Disposition.

Mr. Hoadly hath been pleased to Promise a Second Part: and therein to shew, that the Arguments propos'd (on the behalf, and often in the very Words of the Ejected Ministers) are not sufficient to justify a Separation, even though the Terms of Ministerial Conformity were Unreasonable. He hath undertaken at the same time to Consider, what hath been offer'd in Vindication of the Dissenting Laity. For this I think it requisite to wait some time, that the Argument may not appear maimed and imperfect.

And though it was upon the maturest Deliberation, before ever I was Ordain'd, that
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I judged it my Duty to Separate from the Present Establishment; and have not hitherto seen any Reason to alter my Sentiments: Yet when I come to have the whole of what is thought proper to be Objected in View, I shall (if God give Life and Health) after fresh Consideration, either let the World know why I apprehend the Grounds of Moderate Non-conformity to remain (as I still think them) unshaken; or else freely yield to the force of their Arguments, as becomes an Honest Man.

Divine

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ROM. IX. XVI.

*So then it is not of him that willeth, nor
of him that runneth, but of God, that
sheweth Mercy.*

THERE hath been a mighty Debate in the Christian Church, both in former and Later times, How it comes about, that any of the Race of Apostate *Adam* are recover'd and sav'd. That *all have sinned, and are come Short of the Glory of God*, is too evident, to be at all contested. That some are rais'd out of their forlorn and miserable State, and train'd

Rom. 3:23

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up in this Life for Happiness in the next ; while others remain incurably fond of their Chains, and wedded to their own Bane, and
 Rom. 2. 5. so are continually *treasuring up to themselves wrath against the Day of wrath*, is also undeniable. But to what this difference is to be ascrib'd, is not so well agreed. That they indeed that perish have their ruin lying at their own doors, is on all Hands own'd. But how others in the mean time come to be sanctify'd and sav'd, hath appear'd to some not so evident. The Great Question that hath been hotly agitated in their Case is this : Must the Foundation of the Difference between them and others be sought for in God or in the Creature ? The Question hath been often started, and as oft' determin'd, and yet is ever and anon returning : and it is of no small Consequence, on which side we determine. For not only our Notions as to many Points of our Religion depend upon the Decision ; but it hath also a mighty influence upon Practise. And therefore it nearly concerns us to weigh matters well, that so our Sentiments may be bottom'd upon such firm and Stable Grounds as may be able to support them.

This is a Point, that has been canvast with abundant Nicety in the Schools, where the Determination of the Question on either side hath been clogg'd rather than clear'd with a variety of Distinctions, by propounding
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ing which, and attempting to explain them, it would be much more easy to lead you into a Maze, than I should afterwards find it to lead you out again. Nor can I see any need of creating you perplexity, by so much as mentioning their Crabbed Notions, since I look upon St. *Paul* as clearly determining the Question in the words before us, to the Satisfaction of all such as will stand to the Award of Scripture. He is fully on God's side, and lays the Creature in the Dust before him, when he so Positively declares, that *it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy.*

Which Words I'll First endeavour to explain and open. Then I'll set my self to clear, illustrate, and confirm their Proper Sense: And Annex in the Close a Suitable Improvement.

In order to Explication, there are four Enquirys which need a Resolution. 1. How these words come in in the Train of the Apostles Discourse, where they are connected with a *So then*? 2. What *that* is, that is *not of him that willeth and runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy*? 3. What is here to be understood by *Willing and Running*. And 4. What by *God shewing Mercy*?

1. Then, as to the Cohærence of the Words, they are brought in as an Inference. This Leads to the Consideration of the *Context*; which you may take briefly thus:

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That which our Apostle treats off in this and the two following Chapters, is the Rejection of the *Jews* and the Calling of the *Gentiles*. This was a very tender Point, and likely to give great Offence : And therefore he begins his Discourse about it, with expressions of a most Hearty Concern, in the three first Verses. He makes a most solemn Appeal, as to his *Sorrow* and *Heaviness* on the Account of his Countrey men, who were continually more and more provoking God to cast them off by their obstinate Infidelity : Nay he wishes that he were even *Accursed from Christ*, if that might be a means of their Salvation. But I think we must look upon that as signifying his Willingness to be divested of his Apostleship and other Peculiar Priviledges, Nay to be Cast out of the Christian Church, and reduc'd to a Pagan State, and even esteem'd one abhorr'd of Christ himself, for their Benefit, if it were a possible thing for it to be that way promoted, rather than a deliberate Consent to be really for ever separated from him. That he might the more fully convince the *Jews* that he was far from despising them, he reckons up *vers.* 4 & 5. several Particulars, in which lay their Pre-eminence and Dignity above other Nations : And yet he shows that this People, tho' so highly dignify'd by God, might be by him Cast off and rejected, without his being at
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all unfaithful : For that he by his Promise to *Abraham* had not resign'd his Sovereignty ; but reserv'd to himself the free disposal of the Blessings he had promis'd, as he thought fit : as sufficiently appear'd by the different treatment of *Isaac* and *Ismael*, *Esau* and *Jacob*, and their respective Descendants. We may very well suppose, that these were therefore pitcht upon as Instances, because their Case and History was so well known among them, and so liable to their Observation. And because the poor *Jews*, who when they carried it most unsuitably to their special Relation to God, would yet pride themselves in their Descent, and cherish tawring thoughts of their own worth, might be apt to think this *unrighteous*, the Apostle tells them that God of old by his Servant *Moses* claim'd to himself a Right and Liberty without impeachment, of distributing his Special Favours to whom he pleas'd, when he made use of those remarkable Words, which are cited just before the Text ; *I will have Mercy on whom I will have Mercy ; and I will have Compassion, on whom I will have Compassion.* So then says the Apostle ; that is, from this very Passage I infer, that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy. i. e. I thence conclude, that the Reason why the *Gentiles*, and why Particular Sinners that are unworthy, are embrac'd and

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peculiarly favour'd of God, while the *Jews* and other Sinners are left in their chosen impenitence and infidelity, is not from any Antecedent worthiness or disposedness, that God saw in the former above the Latter, but from his free differencing Grace and Mercy. 'Tis not to be ascrib'd to what is discern'd in Man, to any thing that he of himself is capable of doing, but to the free Mercy of God. That alone makes the difference; and into that must the whole of it be resolv'd.

Mat. 20.
15.

The Inference is highly Just. For *may not God do what he will with his own*? And if he may, then tho' he is so good to all, as that none have Cause to complain, yet where any obtain distinguishing Favours, the Glory is to be reserv'd entire to the Divine Mercy. The Connexion thus Stated carries in it no great Difficulty.

A *Second Enquiry* is this; What *that* is that is *not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy*? What does the *It* here refer to? The Words, *It is*, are omitted in the Original, and supply'd by Our Translatours: and very justly. For the Passage is *Elliptical*, and word for word, runs thus: *So then, not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, &c.* and what that is, that is not so, is a needful enquiry.

'Tis

'Tis Election is meant say some. That in their Apprehension is the thing that is *not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy.* They confirm themselves in their Apprehension, from *vers. 11.* where mention is made of *the Purpose of God According to Election.* Others understand it of Actual Believing only: and say 'tis that that is *not of him that willeth or of him that runneth.* And they argue from the General Series of the Apostle's Discourse in this Epistle. But I should rather take it more generally, as I verily believe the Apostle intended it, and explain it thus. That any are called to a participation of special Covenant Blessings; and that any are so called as to be savingly wrought on: that any become true *Israelites* as to the make of their Spirits, and their interest in the Spiritual Priviledges of the Covenant, According to *vers. 6.* that they are *Children of God,* according to *vers. 7.* and treated as such: that any of those who are all naturally under the Curse, come to be *Children of the Promise,* as you have it *vers. 8.* this is *not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but God that sheweth Mercy.* It is not to be ultimately resolv'd into Humane Pains and Industry: The Spring of it is to be searcht for, not in Man but in God. And he that will Considerately read over this Chapter till he comes to the Text, with this thought,

may (as I apprehend) easily see, that whatsoever other senses the words would bear, this is most natural, free, and easy. But then,

3. It may be farther enquir'd, what we are here to understand by *willing* and *running*? The Answer is easy. It takes in good Inclinations and Dispositions, and a Consonant Practise. 'Tis a common Observation, that 'tis an usual thing with this Apostle to compare a Religious Life to a Course or Race : Where the Favour of God and Happiness in it being fixt as the Prize to be obtain'd, men strive to reach it : First desiring above all things that they may reach it; and then adding vigorous Endeavours to their Desires, and employing their utmost Diligence and Activity in those Religious Efforts, which are as so many Steps towards the reaching of their end. *So run* says he to the Corinthians, *that ye may obtain*. Like Passages are very frequent.

1 Cor. 9.
24.

Phil. 2. 13. What he here calls *willing* and *running*, he elsewhere styles *willing* and *doing*. By *Willing*, he in both places means the simple Desire and Inclination to obey and serve God : and by *running* here and *doing* in the other place, he means a Will so fixt and determin'd to embrace the Service of God that it commands the Active Powers. Neither of them is owing to Man himself; but both are to be ascrib'd to God. 'Tis not from
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Mans foreseen or observ'd Good Desires or Deeds, 'tis not from his Good Inclinations or Motions, that God sets his Love upon him. The moving Spring is his own Mercy. But then,

4. Fourthly, in Answer to the last Query, it may suffice to intimate, that by the *Mercy* of God, we are to understand his Good Will to Men after they were become Miserable : that is, after that by Sin they had lost that happy Condition in which they were at first Created. His thus *shewing Mercy*, proceeds from his sole Goodness, and not from any Reason whereby he was oblig'd to have pity upon any ; and it is exercis'd in a Sovereign way : So that the particular Share of Mercy any receive, must be resolv'd ultimately into his Pleasure ; tho' at the same time God hath discover'd himself in the Revelation of his Gospel, so inclinable to shew Mercy to all, that if any finally perish, He is clear, and it must be ascrib'd wholly to themselves.

These things well consider'd help to lead into the right and true Sense of this Text. But that Mistakes and Abuses may be the more effectually prevented, there are three farther Remarks which are not unneedful.

1. Tho' the Apostle says *'tis not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth*, that one so far differs from another, as to become truly Pious, &c. yet he is far from intimating

2 Pet. 3.
16.

mating that *willing* and *running* is needless; or that the Mercy of God will Act alone, in the securing or furtherance of our Salvation, without a subservient Agency on our Part. This is a Gloss that would have Fatal Consequences. They that should be so *unlearned* and *unstable*, as thus to *wrest* this Text, (as St. Peter tells us many have done some other Passages of St. Pauls Epistles) might do it to *their own Destruction*.

Prov. 10.
22.

With good reason may we tell the Country man that 'tis not from his Plowing and Sowing that he has a Good Crop, but from the Kind Providence of Almighty God; And the Citizen, that it is not his Diligence and Industry, but *the Blessing of the Lord that maketh rich*: But should either the one or the other thereupon apprehend that their Care and Pains might be spared; should they go to throw all upon God, expecting he would Act alone; no other could be expected, than that they should smart for Folly.

Psal. 127.1

There is scarce any thing more easily observable to those who are conversant with the Sacred Scriptures, than the Care that is there taken to ascribe all things to God. This holds so universally, that even the Commonest things, in which all the World knows our Pains is necessary, are not excluded. *Except the Lord build the House, says David, they labour in vain that build*

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build it. But tho' their Labour is in vain any otherwise than under the Conduct and succeeding Influence of Divine Providence, yet who expects a House should be built without Labour? Would not this be esteem'd by any one an Extravagance contrary to common Sense? So we are told by the Prophet, *that it is not in Man that walketh to direct his Steps.* Jer. 10. 23. Under the sense of which he looks seriously upward, and his Practice calls for Universal Imitation. For nothing can be more certain, than that our utmost Prudence and Foresight cannot secure us of Success in any one Undertaking: and therefore there's all the Reason in the World for *acknowledging God in all our Ways,* and humbly begging that he would *direct our Paths.* Prov. 3. 6. And yet *still the Wise Mans Eyes are in his Head.* Eccles. 2. 14. Should he forbear using them, and Act blindly, and at all Adventures, without looking before him, and round about him, He'd be running upon Snares and Precipices at every turn, and but expose himself in pretending to expect that the Providence of God should interpose to preserve him. The Case before us is not unlike. Without all question, God will save none without *willing and running,* tho' he will not save any for it. It will not indeed be to that that their Salvation will be owing, and yet that in its Place is absolutely necessary. Otherwise,

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Otherwise, how comes *running, striving, wrestling* and *fighting*, to be so often urg'd, and so earnestly press'd by this very Apostle in all his Epistles, upon all that ever would be Heirs of Salvation? Not to mention other Places; Consider his solemn Charge to the *Philippians*. *Phil. 2. 12. Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling.* There's no reconciling that with this Text, or even with its own Context, upon any other Supposition than this: that tho' we shall never be sav'd for our willing, or running, or working; yet to hope that the Mercy of God will save us without Activity, nay without the utmost Activity, on our Part, under his Conduct and Influence, is a Gross Delusion.

2. Nothing can be more remote from the Apostles intention here, than to intimate any such thing as if Heartly Willing was ever fruitless. When he says, *'tis not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy*, He is far from meaning that he is at all backward to *shew Mercy*, where he finds Persons heartily *willing* and *running*. That none indeed do Heartily *will* and *run* of themselves any otherwise than as excited of God; that he throws a Mantle over us, as *Elijah* did in the Case of *Elisha*, before we think in earnest of leaving those Employments which are more agreeable to corrupt Nature, and following
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ing Him, is with me past Doubt ; and will be evidenc'd in the subsequent Part of this Discourse : For I must confess I apprehend this to be a thing in this Text mainly intended : And yet still this must stand Firm ; wheresoever Persons do *will* and *run*, God is ready to *shew Mercy*. He that discovers so much Compassion towards us while *alienated, and enemies in our Mind by wicked works* ; He that invites us to himself with such earnestness and importunity ; He that waits to be Gracious, and hath assur'd us with an Oath, that he hath *no pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that he turn from his way and Live* : He that seeks us so carefully as Lost Sheep while we are wandering from him in the Ways of Vanity and Folly, cannot certainly turn his back upon us, when our Wills are fixt for him ; and we are bent upon running in the way of his Commandments. This is utterly unconceivable ; as well because opposite and irreconcilable to his merciful and gracious Nature so many ways discovered ; as because it would carry in it a disowning of his own Work, which such a Temper and Posture produc'd must be acknowledged to be, by all that will give God what he claims as his own. On which Account, tho' we don't say with St. Chrysostom, that *tis of Man to will and run*, we may yet
very

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very safely hold with him * *That this ought to be deeply fixt in our Minds, that it is not possible that that Man should at any time be left of God, who is industrious and careful about his own Salvation, and concerns himself about it, with all possible Diligence.*

3. Note farther, that the Apostle is speaking here of *Mercy*, with reference to those who are Accepted, without giving any Foundation for imagining that the Case is the same on the other side as to Justice and Severity, in the Case of those who are rejected. He declares indeed, that *'tis not of Him that willeth, nor of Him that runneth, but of God that sheweth Mercy*, that any are peculiarly favour'd: But he doth not intimate that *'tis not for want of willing and running, but of God that delighteth in Severity, or in the exercise of meer Absolute Sovereignty*, that others are finally rejected. Neither is there any Parity, as a Foundation for a just Comparison. The Text keeps on the bright side, and states the Case of those whom God treats and embraces as his own; and there it tells us we must

* Homil. in Jerem. 10. 23. Tom. 3. p. 919. D.
 Δὴ οὗτο πεπληναι ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ τῇ ημετέρα δι
 ἀμνησάντων ἡνὰ σπουδῇ χρώμενον καὶ μερμυγάντα ὑπὲρ
 τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σωτηρίας καὶ τὰ παρ' ἑαυτοῦ πάντα
 ἐπιδοκινύμενον ἰγκαταληφθῆναι ποτὶ παρὰ τῷ Θεῷ

must fasten upon unaccountable Mercy as the Rise of all : But if we turn to the Darker side, and view the Case of those who are Cast off by God, we are not allow'd to fasten upon unaccountable Severity as the procuring Cause. That is easily to be accounted for, by recourse to the Creature, and viewing its incurable Malignity, even under the strivings of Divine Mercy. Our Saviour hath himself sufficiently clear'd that matter, when he in so many Words tells those among whom he preacht, and before whom he wrought his Miracles, that this was their Ruin : *Ye will not come to me that ye might have Life.* Joh. 5. 40.

Some possibly in opposition to this, might be ready enough to fasten upon a Passage we meet with in the next Verse but one to the Text, where we have these Words, *and whom he will, he hardneth.* Which may seem upon a light and transient View to intimate, as if God was to the full as Arbitrary in his Severity, as in his Mercy. But closer thoughts on the matter will, I'm perswaded, produce different Apprehensions. For the main Argument, which the Apostle is pursuing in this Chapter proves the contrary. That *Isaac* indeed was preferr'd before *Ismael*, and *Jacob* before his Brother *Esau*, was, as the Apostle tells us, to be ascrib'd to the special Goodness of God : But that the *Jews* who were the Descendants

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dants of these Gods special Favourites, were about to be cast off, while the *Gentiles* were taken in ; this he tells us was long of themselves. And therefore, *ver.* 32. He gives a plain Reason of the *Jews* rejection, tho' he had before intimated throughout the Chapter, that there was no Reason but Sovereign Mercy to be given, either for the Calling of the *Gentiles*, or the Favouring of some Particular Persons, while others were rejected. For he shows the *Jews* were cast off, not because God was bent upon their Ruin ; but because by Error they hardened themselves against Christ, as not answering their Carnal erroneous Expectations : Which he particularly dilates upon in the Chapter that immediately follows.

And as for that Phrase of God's *Hardening* Persons, it need Create no difficulty, if it be regarded as a Penal Act, consequent upon their own self Hardening: a Penal withdrawment of forfeited Grace, upon which nothing but Hardness can ensue. Thus it most plainly is to be understood in the Case of *Pharaoh*, which is here referr'd to. That it is so to be understood in the Case of others also, is plain from *vers.* 22, & 23. where we are told, that God *prepares the Vessels of Mercy unto Glory*, on one Hand : but not that he prepar'd the Vessels of Wrath for Destruction on the other Hand ; but that he *with much Long-suffering*
and

and Patience endured them: A clear Evidence that he rather permitted them when left to themselves, to Harden their own Hearts, than positively concurr'd in it. And indeed, tho' the Divine Mercy is ever free, yet Gods Severity is always deserv'd.

Being thus led into the proper Sense and Intention of the words, we cannot be at a Loss as to the Head of Christian Doctrine which they suggest to our Meditation; which is this:

That the Mercy of God, is the only true and proper Spring of the Recovery and Salvation of a lapsed Creature.

The Handling this Important Truth with any Exactness, is far beyond the Compass of a single Discourse. I shall therefore content my self with branching out the matter into four plain Propositions, which appearing confirm'd by Scripture, and Reason, will present the Point propos'd to our View, as attended with a Convincing Light.

1. Prop. The Providing a Mediatour, and all Overtures about Reconciliation through him, are of God that sheweth Mercy. Nothing but meer Pity and Compassion could move him, when so highly Affronted, to think of a Saviour for a Lost World; whom he might have left to perish in their miserable State, without any room for an Impeachment. Alas, what could poor Fallen
C Man

Gen. 3. 8,
10.

Man do to deserve a Saviour, or to induce God to provide one for him! In his Enmity, he had no thoughts of Reconciliation: nay instead thereof, was for hardening himself in his Rebellion. We find Guilty *Adam* flys from God, even in *Paradise*; instead of moving towards him, to beg Pardon, and make his Peace. Jealousy and Fear is a natural Attendant of Guilt. And that prevailing, confirms in an Obstinate Hardness. Fallen Man was so far from thoughts of returning back to God, or doing any thing to move him to relax the threatned Punishment and forgive; He was such a Stranger to *willing* and *running* towards Him, that he was for shunning all Converse with him, and for standing wholly upon his own bottom, and that notwithstanding it was evidently discernable, that nothing but Misery could be the Upshot. This was the Case when God was pleased to give the first Notice of a Saviour, and of intending his own Son for a Mediatour. Hath Man then any thing here to do? must not the whole be resolv'd into Gods inclination to shew Mercy? Why should a Saviour be design'd for fallen Creatures of any sort, when they had wilfully forfeited all their Interest in God? and why for Men rather than Apostate Angels? What Account can be given of this, but that thus it pleased God to shew Mercy? and to select the race of
Apostate

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19

Apostate *Adam* as Objects of it, rather than a much nobler Order of Creatures, who were in a like Condition? Our Lord himself ascribes this wholly to the Love of God, and so must we. *God (says he) so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, &c.* Joh. 3. 16. This is Universally own'd, and therefore I go on.

2 *Prop.* Means us'd towards the Recovery of Fallen Man, through this Mediatour, are of *God that sheweth Mercy*. What our Blessed Lord said to his Disciples, as to the Peculiar Favours that were conferr'd upon them is very remarkable. *It is given unto you to know the Mysterys of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given.* Matth. 13. 11. It holds true not only as to any Peculiar Illumination to serve certain special Divine Purposes, but as to other Expressions of the Divine Benignity, any kind Methods, that have a Beneficial tendency; all are *given*; none are deserv'd; they are *given* by one that is not indebted. So that if they had not been *given*, the Creature had not any way been wrong'd; but having them *given* should be led to adore the Divine Mercy. All the Marks of the Divine Goodness that any of the Children of Men enjoy in their Apostate State, come to them through a Mediatour: and are all Given by a God shewing Mercy. We may here distinctly con-

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sider Providential Means, and Ministerial Helps.

Acts 14.
17,

Providential Means are very Considerable in their Place. *St. Paul* and *Barnabas* told the Poor blind Heathens they were preaching to at *Lystra*, that God *left not himself without witness*, even amongst them. Witness of what? why he Left not himself without Witness, of his inclination to shew Mercy upon some Account or other, tho' that was not distinctly discover'd to them. They instanc'd in his *giving Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons; and filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness*: which were convincing Evidences, that God was their merciful Ruler and Benefactor, and that they were not us'd as they deserv'd: For if they had; had not God been inclin'd to shew Mercy; they'd have had quite other sort of Treatment. And indeed, all the Kindness of Providence, all the Restraints upon Persons, whereby they are kept from being as bad as otherwise they would be, all Conduct in Straits, Succours in Difficultys, Deliverances from Dangers, Success in Affairs, and Supplys of such things as tend to make Life Comfortable, and render Men useful, and Blessings in their Places, are design'd to lead those to Repentance that will take notice of Gods design in them, are efforts of the Divine Mercy for their Good.

But

But *Ministerial Helps* rise much higher. By instituting a Ministry in his Church, God hath appointed an Order of Men, whose great Work and Business it is, to *Beseech* 2 Cor. 5. Lost Sinners to be reconciled to Him. They 20. are to shew Men the wretchedness of their Condition, point out their Saviour to them, set him in all his Charms before them, and press them to accept his offer'd help, by the most moving Arguments of Duty and Interest; and to urge those Considerations upon them, that have the greatest tendency to work both upon their Fear, and upon their Hope. This must be own'd a vast Advantage. Observing indeed how strangely Men are wedded to their Lusts, and how unwilling to be separated from them, 'tis natural enough to cry out, that 'tis as foolish an Attempt to go about in such a Case to use Perswasion, as it would be to go among the Tombstones, and call upon the Dead, to arise out of their Graves. It must be confess'd, it hath such an Appearance; neither would the Reality of the Case be different, had we Ministers only, our own Skill and Strength, and the Natural Energy of our own Words and Arguments to depend upon. And yet, *it pleases God even by the foolishness of Preaching, to save them that believe.* 1 Cor. 1. 21. In this Way and Method, which the Wise men of the World so much despise, doth it please God to bring in, and build up the

the Heirs of Salvation. Many in all Ages have been this way recover'd and sav'd. And as there is Great Mercy in instituting the Office of the Ministry in General, So is there a Peculiar Disposal of that very Mercy to some rather than others that Deserves Observation.

Some that pretend to have made an exact Calculation, do observe, that if the Earth, as far as it is at this day known, were divided into 30 Equal Parts, 19 of them are Pagan, 6 Mahmetan, and but 5 Christian. Who that gives way to Consideration, can forbear wondring that these five Parts of the Earth should be more favour'd than the other 25 !

Whence comes it then, that any Land or Nation, or any Particular Persons, are favour'd with a faithful Gospel Ministry, which of all things external is the greatest Help, and most promotes their Recovery ? is this from Man or from God ? is it from their own willing and running, or from God that sheweth Mercy ? Take it in the Case of the Gospel's first coming to any People, and the Drift of my Argument will appear most plainly. When any Nation that before was cover'd with Heathenish Darkness, has the

Mal. 4. 2. *Sun of Righteousness arising upon them, with healing in his Wings ; when those that bow'd down before Stocks and Stones, and debased themselves in worshipping Dumb Idols, have*

have Gospel Ministers sent amongst them, as Ambassadors from the God of Peace, to publish Pardon and Reconciliation, and persuade them to a Compliance with the Divine Demands through a Mediatour, in order to their Salvation; is this owing to to their own previous pains, good Disposition, and earnest Application on that behalf, beyond others, or to God's inclination to shew Mercy to them? I should think the bare Proposal of the Question would shew any one how to determine it. Should there be any demurr, I would recommend the History of the spreading of the Gospel, as related in the *Acts of the Apostles* to serious Consideration. 'Twould draw me too far aside to dilate upon it; But this will appear evident to such as peruse it with any Thought or Observation: That as the Apostles were under Divine Conduct in going from one Countrey to another, to spread the Everlasting Gospel, so their being directed to one Countrey rather than another, was not because the Persons to whom they should apply themselves, were more deserving of such a Favour than they were elsewhere. For the Apostles were forbidden to preach the Gospel to some where they found no opposition among the People, and were commanded to preach in other places, where People shew'd themselves grossly unworthy.

This matter deserves to be Consider'd in the Case of this Land of Ours, that was sometimes favour'd with a Gospel Ministry, while many other Countries that were in Situation much nearer to that particular Spot of Ground, where our Saviour liv'd on Earth, and whence his Apostles and their Followers first set forth to spread the Gospel, were left without it. Do you imagine, it was because we were better than others, more dispos'd to receive and entertain the Gospel, and comply with it, than the People in other Lands, that we have been more favour'd? Was this the reason of the difference made between us and them in this respect? I think we may very safely defy any that should alledge it, to give the least shadow of an Evidence of the Truth of it. Consulting our Sacred Oracles, we find the matter quite otherwise represented. The Prophet *Isaiab* speaking concerning the Conversion of the *Gentiles* by a Gospel Ministry, plainly states the Case, and *St. Paul* after him in God's own words, which are applicable to any Nation or People receiving the Gospel in their Heathen State. *I was found of them* (says God) *that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.* If so, what room is there for a pretence of *willing* or *running*? what words could more fully intimate, that the Benefit of Gospel-Light and Means, must be ascrib'd to God

shewing

Isa. 65. 1.
Rom. 10.
20.

Shewing Mercy? From that Text which is so clear as that it may supply the place of many, I thus argue. Either a Reason distinct from the Divine Mercy to some above others, can be assign'd, why some Nations and Countreys have for many Ages had a Gospel Ministry among them, while others even to this day are without it; or it cannot. If any such reason can be assign'd, I'd gladly know what it is. 'Tis plain it is not *willing* or *running*; for God says expresly, *they sought him not; they asked not after him.* This was not the Case of the Inhabitants of a few Places only, but of the Gentile World in General, and of the several Particular Nations that were amongst them, before *the day Spring or Sun-rising from on high visited them; to give Light to them that sate in Darkness, and in the shadow of Death: to guide their Feet into the way of Peace.* ENGLAND, SCOTLAND and IRELAND no more ought or ask'd after God, before the Gospel came among us, than the Island of MADAGASCAR: or HOLLAND than TARTARY. Why then is one Countrey more favour'd with so great a Blessing than another? Let those, who are the most averse to the giving the Glory entirely to the Divine Mercy, solve this Point in the Case of Nations, and we'll solve it afterwards the same way in the Case of Particular Persons, as to their Peculiar outward
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Luk. i. 78, 79.

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or inward helps, with which God is pleas'd to favour them ; till then let them be silent, and rest satisfy'd with that in one, with which they must be satisfy'd in the other Case, unless they'l egregiously trifle.

3 *Prop.* The inclination of lapsed Creatures, even under the aptest means to put forth themselves with Concern and Vigour in a way of Endeavour, is not from themselves, but given and stirr'd up by God that sheweth Mercy. In proof of this, Let it be distinctly consider'd, what Account is given in Scripture of the Condition of Mankind, while under the Power of Corruption, and of that Divine Operation which precedes and produces the Change and Alteration, when they are brought heartily to will and run in the ways of God.

1. Let us Consider what Account we have given us in Scripture of the Condition of Mankind while under the Power of Corruption. This is very significantly described to us in a great variety of Expressions, of which some are Proper, and others Metaphorical. We are told that in the Condition in which the Gospel Call comes to

Rom. 5. 6. us, we were *ungodly*, and *without strength*. We had nothing in us to move God to help us, for we were *ungodly* : No power to help our selves, for we were *without Strength*. When the Divine Spirit makes his first Approach

proach; he finds us *dead in Trespasses and Sins*; and *Alienated from the Life of God*. and therefore our Impotency as to the serving any spiritual Purposes is much dilated on. We are told that the *natural* or *Animal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*: for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. If so, How can we in this State be truly willing? So far is it from that, that we are full of Aversion. *The Carnal Mind is enmity against God*; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be; and how then can there be any running, when the Heart stands bent another way? And which is more, our Saviour himself tells us, that we cannot come unto him for that help which he is so ready to afford us, *unless his Father draw us*.

Ephes. 2. 5.
Ephes. 4.
18.

1 Cor. 2.
14.

Rom. 8. 7.

Joh. 6. 44.

I'll freely own that 'tis a very Possible thing, for expressions of this Nature to be over strain'd and carry'd too far. I am well satisfy'd, they are design'd to express a *Moral*, and not a meer *Natural Impotency*; That is to say, that which is mainly intended thereby, is that our Wills Labour under such a Malignity as precludes Hearty Endeavours; such a lamentable Indisposition, as we shall never of our selves get over, or shake off. But in the mean time, they must have but a very low and faint sense of the Depravity of our Natures, who after all that

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is suggested in Holy Writ upon that Head, do yet apprehend, that any Man (whatever his natural Power may be said to suffice for) does actually *will* and *run*, without a Powerful Divine touch upon his Heart. And then,

2. Let us also consider the Account we have given in Scripture of that Divine Operation, which precedes, and produces the Change and Alteration that there is in those Persons, who are brought heartily to will and run in the ways of God. The Illumination of the Mind is compared to Gods

2 Cor. 4. 6. *causing Light to shine out of Darkness in the Creation. And we are said to be Gods Work-*

Ephes. 2. *manship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works. And to be born again. And to*

John 3. 3. *have Faith which is the root of all acceptable Obedience, wrought in us by the same*

Ephes. 1. *Power whereby God raised Christ from the Dead.*

19, 20. *God is also said to give us a new Heart, and to put a new Spirit within us, to take away the*

Ezek: 36. *Stony Heart out of our Flesh, and to give us an Heart of Flesh ; to put his Spirit within us,*

26, 27. *and cause us to walk in his Statutes, and keep his Judgments. Which magnificent sort of Expressions, with many others of the like nature, we may well conceive had never been us'd by the Sacred Pen men, but to signify to us our absolute Dependence upon a powerful Divine Operation, for any thing in us that hath a Saving tendency ; for our Conversion, with all its happy Fruits and Effects.*

God

God hath various and those very different Methods of reaching the same End. Not to multiply Particulars, he works upon some by *Afflictions*, and upon others by his *Word*. But be it by either of these means, or any other way, that such as were naturally indispos'd or averse, and of a sensual Disposition, are brought in earnest to mind the things of God, and to apply themselves with seriousness to the great Concern of Religion, *willing* and *running* like those that are deeply sensible how much depends upon it, it is to be ascrib'd to God *shewing Mercy*.

Afflictions are a means God often uses to do good to Souls, and they have a tendency that way. Adversity many times brings those to consider their ways and be wise, who while their Estate was prosperous forgot God, their Souls, and another World, and liv'd as if they were to live here always. And therefore we are told, that *when Gods Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness*. They will, that is, some will be brought to it under the influence of the Grace of God. *Manasseh*, when all things went well with him, *wrought much Evil in the sight of the Lord*: but when he was in *Affliction*, when he came afterwards to be taken by his enemies, bound in Fetters, and carry'd Captive into *Babylon*, then he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God

Isa. 26. 9.

2 Chron. 33. 6, 11, 12.

Luke 15.
17.

God of his Fathers. Then he became a true Penitent. But it was God that set in, and this way impress'd those Considerations strongly upon him, that were needful to awaken him, otherwise no such effect had been produc'd. So also the poor Prodigal, when he was pinch'd and almost starv'd, thought of returning to his Father. But it was God that stirr'd those thoughts in his Mind, and fixt them upon him, or even under the utmost Straits, he had continu'd a Vagabond still. This is plain from hence, in that Affliction hath no Power to transform the Mind or subdue Corruption. It is a means, but no farther effectual than as manag'd and directed by God the great Agent ; And therefore *Elibu* was altogether in the right, when shewing *Job* in his great Distress, that God called Men to Repentance by Afflictions, and how they produced good Effects, he concludes thus: *Lo*

Job 33. 29 *all these things worketh God oftentimes with Man.* For though Men are to look about them and Consider well, that they mayn't loose the Benefit of their Afflictions, yet 'tis God's working that at any time makes them instrumental to turn a Sinner into a Saint, or to advance his faithful Servants in real Holiness.

The *Word* of God, and that as publish'd and preach'd by his Ministers, is often also instru

instrumental, in producing a Saving Change: but no otherwise than as it pleases God therewith to *reveal his Arm*: i. e. to display his Power. When God sends us to a Company of poor Sinners, our Case is much the same with that of the Prophet *Ezekiel* in his Vision among the *Dry Bones*. Upon a Command of God we Cry aloud as he did, *O ye dry Bones hear the Word of the Lord*. And when it pleases God to *cause Breath to enter into them, they Live*, but not before. When God opened the Heart of *Lydia*, she then attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul. Before she heard them as common things, they had no effect: But God opening her Heart the Word entred, and became the *Seed of a new Birth*: after which she came Heartily to will and run in the way to Heaven.

Isa. 53. 1:

Ezek. 37.

Ver. 4.

Ver. 5.

Act. 16. 14

1 Pet. 1. 23

St. Paul often discovers a warm Sense of his entire Dependance on the Divine efficacy for the Success of his Labours in the Work of the Gospel, whereby he endeavour'd to do good to Souls. *Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but Ministers by whom ye believ'd; even as the Lord gave to every Man? I (says he) have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the encrease*. He never was afraid of ascribing too much to God. And indeed we Ministers may preach till Doomsday, and never be the Instruments of any Man's Conversion,

1 Cor. 3. 5, 6.

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version, never bring any Heartily to *will* and *run* in the Ways of God, unless he interposes with his Almighty Power. The Mean is good, but the Efficacy that must make it successful, wholly his.

But what need is there of much arguing upon this Point, when we have so plain a Passage as that in the Epistle to the *Philippi-
ans* ; 'Tis God that worketh in you, to will and to do of his good Pleasure. One would think that single Place should convince all those of great Presumption, who pretend that Gods first Gracious Communication to some above others, is owing to their Antecedent pliable Inclination and Disposition, and to the good use made of their own Free Will. For were that the Case, how could the Apostle resolve the matter into God's *Good Pleasure* ? Nay how could he say their good Inclination and Disposition, with all its happy Effects, were of *his Working* ? The Reason why God gave his special Grace to some, and not to others, would then be very evident. There would be no need of recourse to God's *good Pleasure* ; for there's none but must own that a deserving Person ought to be preferr'd before one that merits nothing : One that is humble and mollify'd, before another that is Fierce and Proud : and he that shall incline his Will to that which is Good, before him that is incurably in Love
with

with Sin and Wickedness. But says the Apostle, God finds no such difference in his first Application to us; and what difference there is, arises from *his working in us*. That little Addition, of *his good Pleasure*, at once overthrows the System of those who plead that God only gives us the Power of willing and doing; that he hath given us a Free Will, but that 'tis we that turn our own Wills either to Vice or Vertue, Sin or Holiness. For if it is of *Gods good Pleasure* that some are wrought on, while others are left to themselves (which might have been the Case of all, without any injustice) then is there a Separation and Distinction which he makes between Men and Men by a Pure Act of his Mercy: whereas there is not a Man upon Earth, to whom he hath not given the Faculty of willing, in bestowing on him a Reasonable Soul. This *good Pleasure* of God speaks something peculiar in the Case of some above others. For though God hath done more for all, than he was bound to do for any, yet if he did not do more for some than he does for all, none of the Apostate Race of *Adam* would ever be sav'd.

This is what *St. Paul* seems to have laid a mighty stress upon, for he oft'inculcates it. He particularly appears much concern'd to curb that Proud aspiring which would be the unavoidable Consequence of supposing, that the

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Difference, that there is between God's Children and others, was owing to themselves.

1 Cor. 4.7 He cries out, *who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* I can easily grant, that these words of his have a special Reference to those eminent Gifts whereby one Pastor differ'd from another among the *Corinthians*: and yet we may draw from them an Argument, as from that which is greater to that which is less in our Case: For if different *Gifts*, were to be ascribed to God; differencing *Grace* must be so much more. So that they are very aptly applicable to any Member of the Church; to any one brought home to Christ under a Gospel Ministry; to any one brought in earnest to look out after God. 'Tis God and not the Teacher, 'tis God and not he himself, that makes him to differ from another Man, who sits it may be all the while under the same Ministry, and enjoys the same means; and was perhaps in humane Appearance the more likely to be Converted of the two. The Council of *Orange*, which was Assembled A. C. 529, in whose Determinations we have in the Judgment of the Great *Usher* and the Learned *Dailly*, the best Decision of the Difficulties that relate to *Grace* and *Free Will*, that are to be met with in all Antiquity: This Famous Council cites
this

this place of Scripture among others,
* to prove that it is from special Grace,
and the influence of the Spirit, that any
Inclination is produced in the Will of a
Corrupt Creature towards God.

So that God's first stirring up of Persons
to *will and run*, which is the Foundation of
any Difference that afterwards appears be-
tween them and others, with respect to Grace,
is attended with an abundant Evidence.

4 Prop. Our participation of the Promi-
sed Blessings upon our *willing and running*, is
not of Man, or owing to the Energy of our
own Endeavours, but to *God that sheweth
Mercy*. As it is of God that we *will and run*,

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* Vide Capitula Hujus Concilii in *Usser. Pri-
mord. Eccles. Britannic.* Cap. 14. --- Ubi Art. 6.
sic se Habet. --- Si quis Sine gratia Dei credenti-
bus, volentibus, desiderantibus, conantibus, La-
borantibus, vigilantibus, studentibus, petentibus,
quærentibus, pulsantibus nobis, misericordiam
dicit conferri divinitus; non autem ut creda-
mus, velimus, vel hæc omnia, sicut Oportet;
agere valeamus, per infusionem & inspirationem
S. Spiritus in nobis fieri confitetur; & aut humi-
litati aut Obedientiæ humanæ subjungit Gratiæ
Adjutorium, nec ut obedientes & humiles simus
ipsius gratiæ donum esse consentit; resistit A-
postolo dicenti: *Quid habes quod non accepisti?*
& *Gratiâ Dei sum id quod Sum.* 1 Cor. 4. 7.
1 Cor. 15. 10.

so is all that we that way gain to be ascrib'd to him. And if natural Endeavours are so dependent upon God for Success, as the Scriptures represent them, 'tis but reasonable to suppose, that our Endeavours in Spirituals should be so much more. And therefore tho' we are bid to *Repent, that our Sins may be blotted out*; we yet are told that we have *Forgiveness of Sins, according to the Riches of God's Grace*. Though 'tis declar'd to us, that by *Christ all who believe* (and only such) *are justify'd*; we yet are said to be *justified freely by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ*. And indeed it being God only that by the Gospel Promise hath fixt the Connexion between Repentance and Forgiveness, Faith and Justification; and he working in us by his Efficacious Grace, that Repentance and Faith, by which we obtain Forgiveness, and come to be Justify'd: 'Tis plain, that our reaching those inestimable Blessings must be resolv'd into his Grace: by which alone it is that we obtain them, while others under the same Offers, Means, and Helps, remain all their days Strangers to them. Neither is it difficult to conceive that as it is with these Fundamental Blessings, so it is also with those other Blessings consequent upon them; viz. Peace with God; the comforting, strengthening, stabilishing Influences of the Spirit; A growth in Grace; and an improving meetness for the

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Heavenly Glory; as to all which the Rule of Procedure is very intelligible: *Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.* Mat. 25. 29. *Unto every one that hath, that is, hath improv'd former vouchsafements. He that improves what he has, shall have more; he shall have abundance. But when the first vouchsafements, the improvement, and the further Addition upon that improvement, is of God; all plainly resolves it self into his Mercy. And in apprehending this the State of our Case, whoever is otherwise minded, we manifestly have St. Pauls Concurrence, when he cries out, by Grace ye are saved, through Faith, and that not of your selves, it is the Gift of God.* Ephes. 2. 8

These matters admit of copious Proof, were I to enlarge a single Discourse into a Treatise: For fear of which, I'll only add a Passage I have met with of St. *Austin's*, which much pleases me, because I apprehend he hath hitt the Truth in this matter, so as to avoid Extremes, of which, I must confess, I am always fearful. Descanting upon my Text, he hath these words:

* *God both renders Mans Will good, and prepares*
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* Li. 83. Quæst. q. 68. & Lib. 1. ad Simpl. q. 2. *Hominis Voluntatem Bonam & præparat adjuvandam, & adjuvat præparatam: & nolentem prævenit ut velit; & volentem subsequitur, ne frustra velit.*

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paves it for his Help; and also helps it, when he has so prepar'd it: He prevents it when unwilling, that he may render it willing; and he follows it, when it is willing, that it mayn't be willing in vain.

Upon the whole, if the providing a Mediatour, and all Overtures about Reconciliation through Him; and all means us'd in order to the Recovery of Lapsed Creatures through this Mediatour; and their Inclination even under the aptest Means to put forth themselves with Concern and Vigour in a way of Endeavour; and our Participation of the Blessings that are promis'd upon our Endeavours; is neither of *him that willeth*, nor of *him that runneth*, but of *God that sheweth Mercy*; then have we abundant Reason, satisfactorily to conclude, that the Mercy of God is the only true and proper Spring, of the Recovery and Salvation of a Lapsed Creature.

The Use I would make is briefly this.

1. Let us not listen to those, who would perswade us that Man can *will* and *run* of himself. For this does unbecomingly detract from the Mercy of God; our so doing cannot be at all for our Advantage; nay it draws after it pernicious Consequences.

Whatsoever natural Power Man hath left, (which is what this Debate is not concern'd in) to suppose him to have such a Moral Power; that is, such a Disposedness in his Will to Good, as that he should incline himself
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to a Compliance with the Divine Demands, is a detracting from the Mercy of God, to which the Apostle declares all that is Good in us from first to last, ought to be ascribed. He tells us, *it is not of him that willeth and runneth*, and why then should we give any Credit to those who Contradict him, and say it is ; by intimating that it is our *willing and running* that induces God to regard us ? If indeed Man did *will and run* before any Approach of the Spirit of God to the Heart, we may conclude he could not disregard it, because so agreeable to his Will and Design : and on the other side we may with good reason conclude he does not *will and run* of himself, since we have it intimated in the Text, that when God comes to *open any Persons Eyes, and turn them from Darknes to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God*, he finds them *neither willing nor running* ; and therefore we are the more indebted to the Divine Mercy. To detract from this, in order to advance Man's Free Will, is in effect to destroy our own Security, by leaving a strong Hold for the plain Ground, when we have an Enemy to deal with, who is likely to prove hard enough for us. Act. 26. 18

What can we gain ; what can be our Advantage by the opposite Scheme ? 'Tis pleaded, we the other way establish Man's Liberty, and take away all possibility of our being dealt with as Stocks and Stones ; which is one of the most ridiculous Absur-

dities in the World. But in the mean time who is it that thinks we are so dealt with? May we not easily suppose, that he that made us is so well acquainted with our Nature as to be able so to suit himself to us in his Application, as to be secure of Success, without offering us any Force and Violence?

Rev. 3. 7. *Can't he that has the Key of David, and who opens and no Man shuts, open the Lock without breaking the Wards? That would be very strange. Well, but we shall the other way prevent God's being regarded as a Respector of Persons. Which is just as if a Prince who governs all his Subjects with great Wisdom and Lenity, while they are all a parcel of Rebels, might not pick out some of them and make them his Favourites, without being an undue Respector of Persons. It's further urg'd, that upon the other bottom we shall be more clear as to the ruin of those that Perish, that 'tis wholly of themselves. To which we have an easy Reply, viz. that we can sufficiently prove that impenitent Sinners are their own Destroyers, consistently with our Scheme. For tho' 'tis through special Mercy, that any are recover'd and sav'd, yet the Mercy of God is so far exerted towards all, that he's ever before hand with them, and never stops the Current of his Favour towards them, till they obstinately reject the Grace he offers, and wilfully abuse that common Grace which had been afforded to them. But then*

on

on the other side, the pernicious Consequences that attend the putting the *Free will* of Man into that place, which the Apostle assigns to the *Mercy* of God, are very evident. They that hold, that Man wills and runs of himself, and that the Holy Spirit in the first Conversion of a Sinner, or in afterwards carrying on the Work of Grace, does no more than barely propound the Object, in the Preaching of the Word, or give the Faculties, or natural Power to comply, or at most add such a supernatural Grace, as depends upon the Will of Man for its Efficacy, do most woefully hamper and embarrass themselves, and their Followers. Such Persons cannot pray for Grace and Holiness, * and that God would *incline their Hearts to keep his* Testimo-

* They evidently fall in with the Stoicks of old, in some of their most pernicious *Maxims*; while they unjustly Charge their Brethren with an unbecoming Concurrence with them in other Respects. What can be more offensive to Christian Ears, than such Passages as these of Seneca the Philosopher? (*Epist. 31.*) *Beatæ Vitæ Causa & firmamentum est, sibi fidere. Turpe est Deos Fatigare. Quid Votis opus est? Fac te felicem.* And yet how agreeable are they to some Mens Scheme? But methinks that saying of St. Austin, carries its own Evidence along with it: *Irriforia Petitio est, cum id à Deo petitur, quod scitur ipsum non dare, sed ipso non donante, esse in Hominis Potestate. De don. Persev. Cap. 2.*

Testimonies, and put his Fear into them, and take away their Heart of Stone, and give them Hearts of Flesh, and the like : such Petitions would in them be very absurd, as tending to destroy their Humanity. They cannot pray to God to keep them from Apostacy ; for that depends upon themselves. They cannot pray, that God would make the Gospel effectual in the World, and succeed the Labours of those, under whose Ministry they are cast, unto their spiritual Good : For alas he can do no more than he hath done, in giving natural Powers, which they, who are furnish'd with them must take care to use to the best Advantage they can ; or at most, he can only give a greater clearness to the Objects that are propos'd. The impressing them is out of his Sphære.

And they are as unable to praise God as to pray to him. They may indeed Thank him for the natural Powers he has bestow'd upon them, which is a matter of Thanksgiving, that is common with them to all Mankind, who are endued with like Powers : and they may praise him for clearing Objects, which according to their view of things, such as perish may do also as well as they, and upon like Reason : But they cannot find any Reason to praise him for the Success of the same Means and Methods upon them, which were fruitless as to others. For while God did to the fall as much for those

those others as for them, they were so careful and happy as better to use their Powers than their Neighbours, and hence arises the good Success in their Case, which others through their Negligence remain Strangers to. And therefore into themselves must the difference that there is between them and the rest be ultimately resolved; for God had no hand in the After Difference, as such. And should such Persons in these respects either pray to God before hand, or praise him afterwards, all that can be said is this, they forget themselves, and act inconsistently with their own Scheme, which is yet no uncommon thing amongst them*: such is the secret Force of Truth, and we would hope of Grace.

After all, I can't pretend, that the matter as I have now set it before you, is free of all Difficulty: But there is this Satisfaction in adhering to the Account given by St. Paul, above what can be expected in following any Modern Guide, that we have a special Divine Warrant to authorize us. And tho'
we

* 'Twere worth the while for some Men seriously to Consider how they are dispos'd, when they join in the Liturgy of the Establish'd Church, where they so often offer up those Petitions: Lord have Mercy upon us, and incline our Hearts to keep this Law And Write all these thy Laws in our Hearts, we beseech thee.

Divine Mercy Exalted : Or,

we do find some things, that we are not able to get over, yet we may be assur'd, that in leaving his for any of our own Schemes, we should but involve our selves in more and greater difficulties.

2. Let us put things together, and take Notice, that *General Grace* and *Special* are very reconcileable : For God may be so far willing of the Salvation of all, as to be ready to shew Mercy to them if they Repent and Believe ; from which they are hindered by nothing but their own wilfulness : And yet he may be so much farther intent on the Salvation of some, as to use effectual means to bring them to Repent and Believe, to *will* and *run*, that so they may be secur'd within the Compass of his special Mercy. The Scripture appears clear as to both ; and where's the Inconsistency ? why must we deny *General Grace* to exalt that which is *special* ? or deny and depress *special Grace*, to advance that which is *General* ? Is not the Honour of God's *special Grace* and Mercy sufficiently secur'd by our Acknowledging that 'tis that that brings any of the fallen Race of *Adam* to *will* and *run*, and so makes the Difference between them and the rest of the World, who live and die in their Unbelief and Impenitency ? and is not this very

him,

Joh. 3. 16.

consistent with our Owning that *God so loved the World* in general, as that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

him, might not perish, but might have everlasting Life? And on the other side, is not *General Grace* sufficiently secured by our maintaining God's Love to the World, and his willing the Salvation of all Men, on Condition they turn to him? And is not this consistent with our owning that a *special* Divine excitation alone can bring any that are in a state of Corruption, to *will* and *run* in the ways of God? And that he *takes away the Heart of Stone*, and *gives an Heart of Flesh* to all that become his real *People*? And why then should we go about to Dash these Truths against each other which are fairly Consistent, and agree well together? Let us beware of Extreams: and stand upon our Guard, least for fear of one Error, we fall into another.

3. Let us never pretend to open a way for the greater Honour to the Mercy of God, by indulging to Negligence and Sloth. That would be a *turning the Grace of our God into Lasciviousness*. We may be assur'd, that God hath sufficiently secur'd the Honour of his own Mercy, without our needing to run to the Devil for means to advance it. St. Paul in that Passage of his to the *Philippians*, which I have quoted before, urges that very Consideration, that *'tis God that works in us to will and to do*, as an Argument upon all that would approve themselves to him, to *work out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*.
 Let us remember therefore, that such is the Mercy

Jude v. 5.

Phil. 2. 12,

13.

Mercy of God to us, that he encourages us as much to *will* and *run*, even as if the Success depended upon our meer Endeavours. His Grace waits upon us, 'tis offer'd to us, and is always at Hand, where Men have not provok'd him to withdraw it: So that there's no Excuse for Sloth, which is the ready way to provoke God to withdraw the Help, and deny the Assistance of his Blessed Spirit.

4. Let all such as Heartily do *will* and *run*, thankfully adore that *God* that hath *shewn Mercy*. Let them do so the more earnestly, because of their natural Aversion, which they cannot but have found and felt. With what ardour should you Love Him that hath made you special Objects of his Favour? Why you rather than others, under the same Means, Helps and Advantages? How cheerful should your trust be, *that he which hath begun a good Work in you, will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ?* Often think with Joy and Thanksgiving what God hath wrought for you, and in you, and let him have the entire Glory. We should say as Phil. 1. 6. *David, Not unto us, Not unto us O Lord, but to thy Name be the Praise.* 'Tis he that hath cast his Mantle over us, as *Elijah* did over *Elishab*: 'tis he that hath made such Iron to swim. Of this we may be certain, although altogether Ignorant what in Particular is done to us above others. Whatsoever is in us,

us, or done by us that is good, let us ascribe it to God : Remembring, *that the Preparations of the Heart in Man, and the Answer of the Tongue is from the Lord.* Let us glorify God not only on the Account of the first beginnings of a Work of Grace in our Hearts, but on every degree of Progress, every step we take in our way Heavenward. Let us be often setting up our Stone, and saying, Hitherto the Lord hath helped us. *Thou hast wrought all our Works in us and for us.* Prov. 16. 1. Isa. 26. 12.

5. And Lastly ; Since we have all an entire Dependence on the Divine Mercy, let us endeavour to get our Hearts impress'd with as deep a Sense as may be, of the Riches and the Freeness of it, in order to our being thereby engag'd to a Serious and Diligent waiting upon him for a share in it. Do any of you find your selves hitherto disinclin'd to *will and run*, and can you think that a State to be rested in ? Have you hard, stupid, senseless Hearts, and can you be contented ? It's a dismal Symptom : for it's the ready way to be excluded the Mercy of God ; and therefore dread persisting. But at the same time if there are any stirrings of serious Concern in your Breasts about spiritual matters, Remember that you have to do with a Merciful God ; nay a God that is infinite in Mercy : A God that is so merciful, as that he wont exclude you, unless you wilfully and finally exclude your selves. None of you shall ever perish for want of Mercy in God, thro' Christ ; or
Inclina-

Divine Mercy Exalted : Or,

Inclination to discover it ; but if you are lost 'twill be long of your wilful Neglect and Contempt, and wicked abuse of the means of Salvation freely afforded you. Consider therefore the State of your Case. 'Tis from God, and in his Name, that I make the Motion to you. Who knows but he may so set in, as that some of you may at length begin to think how necessary 'tis for you speedily, and without delay to apply your selves to God, through our Blessed Mediatour, begging that he, who alone is able to do it effectually, would stir you up to will and run. If any of you do so, it will be from God : and you may conclude, that it tends to bring you to *will* and *run* indeed, thro' the interposition of that Mercy, which he is ready to shew forth. For when he once begins, he is for going forward ; and his Mercy stops not till the Creature puts the Bar : And therefore as thou canst, complain of thy Spiritual Deadness, Stupidity, and Enmity, and beg of God that he would cure it by his victorious Grace ; but withal conclude, that this, if thou dost it, is from God ; and from *God shewing Mercy* too : A God that had much rather his Mercy should Triumph in thy effectual *Willing* and *Running*, till thou reachest everlasting Salvation ; than that his Justice should be display'd, upon thy persisting in incurable Hardness, in thy final Ruin and Destruction.

Ezek. 33.

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Ezek. 18.

31, 32.

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